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INFO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 3727
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0588
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2719
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 0118
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 3861
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3982
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 3572
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 1446
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1518
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH 1027
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 001359

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/28/2019
TAGS: PREL PGOV SY UNSC SA LE
SUBJECT: GEAGEA COMPLAINS OF MARCH 14 ISOLATION

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶11. (C) Summary: Syria is pushing hard to annul UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1559, and the U.S. should publicly reiterate its support for all resolutions relating to Lebanon, Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea told the Ambassador. Geagea also complained that Saudi Arabia was pushing Prime Minister Saad Hariri and the March 14 coalition into a position of weakness in its effort to improve its relationship with Syria. The Syrian-Saudi rapprochement has taken its toll on March 14 Christians, who perceive a Syrian desire to divide and conquer them, according to Geagea. End summary.

CALLS FOR U.S. SUPPORT FOR UNSCR 1559

¶12. (C) Syria is pushing hard to annul UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1559 because the resolution contains "follow-up mechanisms" which regularly bring international attention to bear on Syria's violations and intransigence, Geagea told the Ambassador on December 23. Geagea asked that the U.S. publicly reiterate its support for all resolutions relating to Lebanon. Although Geagea assessed that Lebanese UN PermRep Nawaf Salam "will not bend to Syrian or (Lebanese) MFA pressure," he stressed that U.S. statements were necessary in reaction to the active opposition of UNSCR 1559 by Syria and its Lebanese allies. "This is a perception of balance of power; Syria asked the West to annul 1559, and the West must say no," he explained. Geagea also asked for public statements reaffirming U.S. support for the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

SAUDIS WELL-INTENTIONED BUT CLUELESS

¶13. (C) Saudi Arabia was pushing PM Saad Hariri and the March 14 coalition into a position of weakness "even though we're winners," Geagea complained. He derided the "childish" Saudi notion that "Hizballah is more dangerous than Syria." Hizballah's military wing would vanish over time, he assessed, but Syria would remain "the main danger" to the Lebanese state. Ibn Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, the son of Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, Geagea said, had taken the lead on Lebanon and Syria and marginalized former Saudi ambassador to Lebanon, Abdulaziz Khoja; as a result, Saudi financial support to March 14 was drying up. Geagea noted he had spoken with Saudi intelligence director Prince Muqrin bin

Abdul Aziz the week before to ask him to stop pressuring Hariri to make concessions to Syria and its Lebanese allies, noting specifically Hariri's trip to Damascus. Geagea said he received no clear response. "The U.S. government must help tell the Saudis they are wrong," Geagea pleaded.

PESSIMISM ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT

¶4. (C) Geagea pointed to the contentious inaugural meeting of the new Lebanese cabinet as evidence that the national unity government would face a rocky path. For example, although nearly all sides agreed that Palestinians must be treated humanely, disagreements over what rights they should obtain would likely prevent quick forward movement, he assessed. On a positive note, Geagea believed that continued stability would open the way for private sector activity to drive economic growth.

¶5. (C) Comment: In the wake of President Michel Sleiman's trip to Washington, the Embassy launched an active media campaign in support of UNSCR 1559 and our other strategic objectives related to Lebanon-related UNSCRs. Despite Syria's recent failure to undercut funding for the UN's political work Lebanon, we expect the campaign against UNSCR 1559 to continue. The Syrian-Saudi rapprochement has taken its toll on March 14 Christians, especially since they perceive a Syrian desire to isolate them from Hariri, as they have already been estranged from Druze leader Walid Jumblatt. Despite the complaints of Geagea and others regarding the evaporation of Saudi funding to March 14 members in Lebanon, we have heard that the Saudis began disbursing funds again after Hariri's December 19-20 visit to Damascus.

SISON